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AN EXAMINATION OF THE GUERRILLA  
STRATEGIES OF LAWRENCE AND MAO

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Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania

15 October 1973

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AN EXAMINATION OF THE GUERRILLA STRATEGIES  
OF  
LAWRENCE AND MAO

by

Colonel Oliver J. Butler, Jr.  
Infantry

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## ABSTRACT

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This essay examines and compares the guerrilla strategies of T. E. Lawrence and Mao Tse-tung. The similarities and dissimilarities in their personal histories and in the situational postures with which they were confronted are pointed up with a view to shedding light on the similarities and dissimilarities in their strategies. The strategic principles expounded by Lawrence and Mao are found to be quite similar, with dissimilarities existing primarily in the emphasis placed by them on certain elements of their strategies and in the tactical implementation of their strategies. Note is made of criticism, as well as praise, of their guerrilla activities. It is concluded that guerrilla warfare is likely to become more and more prevalent in future years; that development of adequate counter-guerrilla strategies requires understanding of guerrilla strategy; and that, in this respect, the strategic principles enunciated by Lawrence and Mao are still valid and pertinent and are being currently utilized by guerrilla leaders.

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INTRODUCTION

Guerrilla warfare, which is characterized by irregular forces engaged in limited and unorthodox actions against regular military forces, has existed throughout history. However, the term "guerrilla" (which is of Spanish origin, meaning "little war") appears to have been first applied to such form of warfare during the 1809-1813 Peninsular War, when the English forces of the Duke of Wellington were aided by Spanish and Portugese partisans in driving the French from the Iberian peninsula.<sup>1/</sup>

Although history records many incidents of guerrilla warfare, the first successful practitioners thereof to prepare any substantive written accounts of their guerrilla theories and endeavors were T.E. Lawrence and Mao Tse-tung. Lawrence's principal writings with respect to guerrilla warfare consist of his book Seven Pillars of Wisdom, his abridged version thereof published as Revolt in the Desert, and an article prepared by him for Encyclopedia Brittanica titled "The Arab Revolt of 1916-18." A much more prolific

writer on the whole, Mao's principal writings on guerrilla warfare are contained in his books On Guerrilla Warfare, Basic Tactics, and Selected Military Writings, and his multi-volume Selected Works. The availability of their writings--coupled with the demonstrated soundness of their strategies and the indisputable success of their endeavors--have made Lawrence and Mao prime reference sources for students of modern-day guerrilla warfare. And, study reveals that the basic guerrilla strategies of Lawrence and Mao continue to be valid and pertinent.

Military observers agree that guerrilla warfare rather than being on the wane is likely to become more and more prevalent. As was commented by the late B. H. Liddell Hart, an eminent military writer:<sup>2/</sup>

Guerrilla warfare has become a much greater feature in the conflicts of this century than ever before...

\* \* \* \*

...Campaigns of this kind are likely to continue because they fit the conditions of the modern age and at the same time are well suited to take advantage of social discontent, racial ferment, and nationalistic fervour.

It would seem evident, therefore, that a familiarity with guerrilla strategy is a necessity for the modern-day military officer. In the words of Captain Hart:<sup>3/</sup>

...If you wish for peace, understand war--  
particularly the guerrilla and subversive  
forms of war.

Thus, it is felt that an examination and comparison of the guerrilla strategies of Lawrence and Mao should be of timely military interest--particularly in view of the fact that the basic principles inherent in the guerrilla strategies developed and implemented by them appear also to be the guiding principles governing the conduct of present day guerrilla operations.

## THE PERSONALITIES

Appreciation of their theories and practices with respect to guerrilla strategy is enhanced by examination of the personal histories of Lawrence and Mao. And, when the markedly different environments and cultures of their origins are noted, the similarities and dissimilarities of their strategic theories and practices become particularly interesting.

### Lawrence

Thomas Edward Lawrence was born in Wales on August 15, 1888--the second of five children born illegitimately to Sir Thomas Robert Chapman and Sara Maden, who lived together under the surname Lawrence. He was well-educated, graduating from Oxford's Jesus College in 1910, at age 22, with first-class honors in history.<sup>4/</sup>

Lawrence had no professional military training prior to his activities in Arabia during World War I except for 8 months enlisted service in the Royal Artillery in 1906, prior to entering Oxford.<sup>5/</sup> In fact, according to his own characterization, he "...was unlike a soldier: hated soldiering."<sup>6/</sup> However, he had developed an interest in military history at an early age and was well-read on



military history and military strategy--having studied, for example, the works of Clausewitz, Jomini, Willisen, Mahan, Foch, Kuhne, Goltz, Caemmerer, Moltke, Guibert, Bourcet, and Saxe, as well as the campaigns of Napoleon and Hannibal and the wars of Belisarius.<sup>7/</sup> He was particularly influenced by the works of Marshal Saxe--who theorized that the best general is the one who achieves victory without battle.<sup>8/</sup>

During 1909, Lawrence visited the Middle East to study the architecture of crusader castles. And, from 1911 to 1914 he was engaged off and on in archaeological explorations in the Middle East. These experiences gave him an opportunity to become familiar with the language, the geography, the peoples, the politics, and the customs of the area--which familiarity was of inestimable value during his subsequent wartime activities in Arabia.<sup>9/</sup>

After the outbreak of World War I in 1914, Lawrence was commissioned a Lieutenant in the British Army. In December 1914 he was assigned to Egypt, attached to the military intelligence staff concerned with Arab affairs. Following the Arab proclamation of revolt against the Turks in June 1916, he participated in a liaison mission to various Arab leaders, including Prince Feisal, the son of Sherif (later King) Hussein.

And, in November 1916--at which time he was a Captain--he was assigned to Feisal's army as political and liaison officer for the British Army.<sup>10/</sup> It was at this point, at age 28, that Lawrence commenced his activities as a guerrilla strategist which earned him promotions to Major and Lieutenant Colonel, which resulted in him being decorated with the Order of the Bath and the Distinguished Service Order, and which made him legendary as "Lawrence of Arabia."<sup>11/</sup>

### Mao

Mao Tse-tung was born in central China's Hunan Province on December 26, 1893--the son of a moderately prosperous merchant-peasant family. Restless and rebellious, he left the family farm at about age 15 and for the next ten years attended various schools--completing Normal School in 1918 at age 24. Although not as well-educated as Lawrence, Mao's education far surpassed that available to most in the China of that time.<sup>12/</sup>

Like Lawrence, Mao had no professional military training although he served for about 6 months as an enlisted man in Sun Yat-sen's Revolutionary Army in 1911-1912. However, also like Lawrence, he was an avid reader and was

familiar with European as well as Chinese military writers-- including Clausewitz, Lenin, Gusev, and Sun Tzu, as well as the campaigns of Napoleon.<sup>13/</sup> Whereas Lawrence was particularly influenced by the writings of Saxe, Mao was profoundly affected by the works of Sun Tzu--the ancient Chinese military writer whose book The Art of War, although dating from 500 B.C., is still a classic of military strategy.<sup>14/</sup>

After graduating from Normal School, Mao worked in the library of Peking University--where he met Li Ta-chao and Ch'en Tu-hsiu, who later became the principal founders of the Chinese Communist Party. In 1919, he returned to Hunan as a school teacher. In 1920, he embraced Communism. And, in 1921, he helped found the Chinese Communist Party. Thereafter, his work and energies were devoted to service in various Party positions in Hunan, Shanghai, and Canton--including concurrent service as a member of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and as an alternate member of the Kuomintang.<sup>15/</sup>

After Chiang Kai-shek assumed leadership of the Kuomintang in 1926, Mao returned to Hunan to instigate peasant rebellions. With the final split between the Chinese Communist Party and the Kuomintang in 1927, he was forced to flee to Ching Kang Shan in the mountains

of southern China. There, together with Chu Teh--Chu Teh serving as Commander of the Red Army and Mao as its political commissar--he began to mold a guerrilla army.<sup>16/</sup> It was at this point, at age 33, that Mao commenced his activities as a guerrilla strategist which eventually resulted in complete Communist control of China and establishment in 1949 of the People's Republic of China--with Mao as its chief of state.

### The Personalities Compared

The dissimilarities between Lawrence and Mao are evident. Lawrence was the product of a genteel, middle-class English environment and culture, was the recipient of a high quality university education, and had travelled extensively in Europe and the Middle East. By contrast, Mao was of peasant stock, was the product of an insular rural culture, was the recipient of merely an adequate education, and had never travelled outside of China. Also, whereas Lawrence was rather apolitical and tended toward romanticism rather than ideology, Mao's endeavors were always marked by political fanaticism and ideological fervor.<sup>17/</sup>

The similarities are equally apparent, upon examination. Thus, upon commencing their guerrilla activities both Lawrence and Mao were amateur soldiers with no professional military training--and Mao never held military rank. Yet, each was well versed in military history and military strategy. Also, both Lawrence and Mao were staunch individualists and introspective thinkers.

Clearly, neither Lawrence nor Mao could be said to have been possessed of any manifest qualification for the role of guerrilla leader and strategist. Yet, time and circumstances forced each into such a role. And, as history affirms, each responded to the challenge with outstanding success.

## THE SITUATIONS

The similarities and dissimilarities in the guerrilla strategies formulated by Lawrence and Mao were undoubtedly influenced by the situations with which they were confronted. Thus, a brief look at such situations is warranted.

### Lawrence's Situation

With Turkey's entry into World War I in 1916 as an ally of the Central Powers, Arab leaders concluded that the time was ripe for an Arab revolt against Turkish rule. Aided principally by Britain--which was interested in protecting its interests in the Suez Canal and in Middle East oil--the goal of the Arabs was expulsion of the Turks from Arab territory. Existing political and social structures were not under attack.<sup>18/</sup>

Thus, the conflict with which Lawrence became involved was essentially nationalistic--without particular concern for political or social ideology. And, throughout the period of his guerrilla endeavors in Arabia, Lawrence was concerned with a strategic objective which was primarily geographic in nature--to rid Arab territory of the Turkish occupiers.<sup>19/</sup>

Certainly, the situation confronting Lawrence in 1916 was not encouraging to contemplate. The Arabs possessed no indigenous army to mount against the well-organized Turkish military forces. Further, the various Arab tribes were not historically homogeneous or unified.

However, common to all the Arab tribes was hatred of the Turks. Also, the vast expanses of Arab territory--much of it unsettled and inhospitable--defied complete occupation and control by the Turks. Upon this foundation rested the hopes of the Arab leaders. And, upon this foundation the framework of Lawrence's guerrilla strategy was constructed.

#### Mao's Situation

Following the split between the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party in 1927, and the resultant elimination of any need for pretense at alliance, the Chinese Communist Party devoted its full efforts to a Marxist revolution. Aided by the Soviet Union, and with a cadre of Soviet-trained leaders, the aim of the Chinese Communist Party was revolutionary overthrow of the established Kuomintang government and establishment of a Chinese "soviet republic"--to be achieved not only by acquisition

of geographic control of China's vast territory but also by reformation of the existing political and social structure of China.<sup>20/</sup>

Thus, the conflict with which Mao was involved was essentially an ideological revolution with geographic, political, and social goals--rather than being primarily a nationalistic uprising, as had been the case with the Arab revolt against the Turks. (It is true that during the 1937-1945 war with Japan the Chinese Communist Party sublimated the ideological aspects of its endeavors and emphasized the nationalistic aspects of its efforts while striving, in uneasy alliance with the Kuomintang government, to expunge the Japanese invaders from China; however, upon Japan's defeat, all pretense of nationalistic alliance was abandoned and all-out revolutionary warfare was resumed against the Kuomintang government). Therefore, in contrast to Lawrence--whose strategic objective had been primarily geographic in nature--throughout the period of Mao's guerrilla endeavors he was concerned with a strategic objective which was not only geographic but also political and social in nature.<sup>21/</sup>

The situation confronting Mao in 1927 was probably even less encouraging than that which had earlier confronted



Lawrence. The Chinese Communists possessed no indigenous army with which to combat the well-organized military forces of the Kuomintang. China was not historically homogeneous or unified. And, since there was no common hatred by the Chinese people of the Kuomintang government, support of the population could not be assumed.

However, as had also been the case with respect to the Arab revolt, the vast expanse of China was such that complete occupation and control by Kuomintang forces was not possible. And, in Mao's view, time was on the side of the Communists. Upon this seemingly meager foundation--coupled with revolutionary zeal and dedication--Mao constructed his guerrilla strategy.

### The Situations Compared

The most striking dissimilarity between the situations with which Lawrence and Mao were confronted was the ultimate objective with which each was concerned. Thus, Lawrence was involved with a nationalistic revolt the strategic objective of which was essentially geographic--to expel the Turks from Arab territory--without political or social concern. By contrast, Mao was involved with an ideological revolution

the strategic objective of which was not only to acquire territorial control of China but also to reform its political and social structure and to establish a soviet-type republic.

Another obvious dissimilarity is the time frame involved. Lawrence's guerrilla activities covered a span of less than two years (from December 1916 to October 1918), whereas Mao was constantly engaged in guerrilla warfare for 22 years (from 1927 to 1949).

Similarity existed, however, in that the guerrilla activities of both Lawrence and Mao were aided by third-party nations--Britain supplying aid and assistance to the Arab forces of Lawrence, and the Soviet Union (and during World War II the United States and Britain) furnishing aid and assistance to the Chinese Communist forces of Mao. Other similarities were the lack of an indigenous organized military force and the necessity of forming such to contend with the organized and disciplined armies of their opponents; the lack of unity and cohesion among the populations from which support would be necessary; and, the vast geographic areas involved.

All in all, neither Lawrence nor Mao was confronted with a situation which could be described as encouraging from

a military viewpoint; and, undoubtedly, military traditionalists would have held forth little hope for success in the endeavors undertaken by Lawrence and Mao. However, the situational postures with which they were confronted were of the same type which usually face guerrilla forces. And, it is just such situational postures which dictate and shape guerrilla strategy.

## THE STRATEGIES

History reflects the broad strategy underlying successful guerrilla warfare to be grounded on protracted harassment--coupled with flexible tactics designed to wear down the enemy with the passage of time. Such strategy normally encompasses political, social, economic, and psychological factors. Thus, guerrilla strategy is essentially a strategy for the morally strong and materially weak.

Both Lawrence and Mao fully recognized the essentials of successful guerrilla strategy. And, each of them capitalized to the maximum extent on those elements of his situational posture which could be turned to advantage.

### Lawrence

That the guerrilla strategy formulated by Lawrence was dictated by the Arab objective and the Arab situational posture is evidenced by his own comments--which comments also reflect his understanding of the distinction between strategy and tactics. Thus, he stated: <sup>22/</sup>

Now the Arab aim was unmistakably geographical, to occupy all Arabic-speaking

lands in Asia. In the doing of it Turks might be killed, yet 'killing Turks' would never be an excuse or aim. If they would go quietly, the war would end. If not, they must be driven out: but at the cheapest possible price, since the Arabs were fighting for freedom, a pleasure only to be tasted by a man alive. The next task was to analyze the process, both from the point of view of strategy, the aim in war, the synoptic regard which sees everything by the standard of the whole, and from the point of view called tactics, the means toward the strategic end, the steps of the staircase. ...

And, with respect to his strategic and tactical analysis he  
23/  
allegorically reasoned that:

In each were found the same elements, one algebraical, one biological, a third psychological. ...

From this premise, which by his own characterization was a "pompous, professorial beginning," Lawrence devised his  
24/  
guerrilla strategy.

The somewhat torturous journey through Lawrence's "algebraical, biological, and psychological" analysis can be avoided by proceeding directly to his own concluding  
25/  
thesis:

...Granted mobility, security, (in the form of denying targets to the enemy), time and doctrine (the idea to convert every subject to friendliness), victory will rest with the insurgents...[emphasis added]

Within such succinctly stated thesis is encompassed the crux

of Lawrence's guerrilla strategy.

The principal tenets of Lawrence's guerrilla strategy can be categorized within his own terminology of "mobility," "security," "time," and "doctrine." And, upon examination such tenets appear to be as follows:

Mobility:

Lawrence considered the space to forces ratio to be the key factor in the formulation of his guerrilla strategy. He calculated that the vast area involved in the conflict between the Arabs and Turks (estimated by him to be perhaps 140,000 square miles) could not successfully be defended by the Turks--that 600,000 men would be required for such a defense whereas the Turks had approximately 100,000 men available. He also reasoned that all regular armies--including the Turkish army--tended to be "...like plants, immobile as a whole, firm-rooted, nourished through long stems to the head. ..." Thus, he concluded that the space to forces ratio was an Arab asset which could be capitalized on by a basic strategy of mobility. He reasoned that the Arab forces should be "...an influence, a thing invulnerable, intangible, without front or back, drifting about like a gas. ..."--that they should be "...a vapour, blowing where they listed. ..." In this manner, Lawrence believed the

Arabs could render the Turkish army helpless by depriving it of a target. As he put it, the Turkish army would own <sup>26/</sup> only the ground it sat on.

As a concomitant to his basic strategy of mobility, Lawrence also determined that the Arabs should adopt a strategy of avoiding battle--the reverse of the normal strategy of war. He felt that "...The contest was not physical, but moral, so battles were a mistake. ..."

Therefore, he concluded that the Arabs should engage in a "war of detachment," that the enemy soldiers should never be given a target, and that attacks against the Turk should be directed "...not against his men, but <sup>27/</sup> against his materials..."

Based on such basic strategy of mobility, and the concomitant strategy of avoiding battle, Lawrence pursued what he referred to as "tip and run" tactics. He felt that the Arabs should never try to maintain or improve an advantage, but should move off and strike again somewhere else; that the Arabs should use the smallest force in the quickest time at the farthest place; and that the Arabs should defend nothing. He also emphasized maximum dispersion of forces--a tactic which normally would invite destruction in orthodox warfare--commenting that "...In

irregular war if two men are together one is being  
wasted. ..."<sup>28/</sup>

Security:

As a corollary of his basic strategy of mobility, Lawrence considered security to be an essential strategic concept; both mobility and security were necessary to achieve the aim of denying targets to the enemy. And, his strategic view of security was essentially threefold--encompassing base, reserve, and intelligence.

Thus, Lawrence recognized that guerrillas cannot fight all the time--that guerrilla strategy must include the maintenance of secure base areas which can be used as sanctuaries. As he phrased it, guerrillas must have "...an unassailable base, something guarded not merely from attack, but from the fear of it..." In the case of the Arabs, such secure base areas were found in the Red Sea ports kept open by the British and in the vast expanse of Arabian desert. Also, Lawrence felt that the people afforded a form of security for the Arab guerrillas--that the Arab revolt had a secure base "...in the minds of men converted to its creed. ..."<sup>29/</sup>

Lawrence also viewed the maintenance of an adequate reserve as an essential part of guerrilla strategy. It



was his thesis that a reserve should never be dispensed with--that "...There is always the possibility of accident... and the reserve is unconsciously held to meet it. ..."<sup>30/</sup> In this respect, Lawrence adhered to established military principles--more so, perhaps, than some guerrilla leaders of recent times.

Lawrence was particularly cognizant of the importance of intelligence to guerrilla strategy. And, the intelligence function was the subject of continuous emphasis by him--his stated goal being "...perfect'intelligence,' so that plans could be made in complete certainty. ..."

According to Lawrence, it was necessary for the Arab guerrillas to "...take more pains in the service of news than any regular staff."<sup>31/</sup>

Time:

Time was unquestionably the broad strategic concept underlying Lawrence's basic strategy of mobility. As was observed by Lawrence:<sup>32/</sup>

The Turkish army was an accident, not a target. Our true strategic aim was to seek its weakest link, and bear only on that till time made the mass of it fall. The Arab army must impose the longest possible passive defense on the Turks...

Lawrence also commented with respect to the situational

posture of the Arabs that:

...Our cards were speed and time, not hitting power, and these gave them strategical rather than tactical strength. ...

Thus, Lawrence clearly considered protracted harassment of the enemy to be fundamental to his guerrilla strategy--the aim being to wear down the enemy with the passage of time.

#### Doctrine:

In the enunciation of doctrine (i.e. indoctrination) as an integral component of his guerrilla strategy, Lawrence evidenced his awareness of the basic difference between guerrilla war and regular warfare--that the ultimate success of a guerrilla struggle depends on the attitude of the people in the area where the struggle takes place. And, Lawrence put heavy emphasis upon this psychological aspect of guerrilla strategy--as he phrased it, the necessity for "propaganda" to achieve an "adjustment of spirit" and a "prearrangement of a changing opinion to a certain end."<sup>34/</sup>

Lawrence clearly recognized that the Arab rebellion must have the support of the local population if its efforts were to be ultimately successful--commenting that:<sup>35/</sup>

...It must have a friendly population,

not actively friendly, but sympathetic to the point of not betraying rebel movements to the enemy. Rebellions can be made by 2% active in a striking force and 98% passively sympathetic. ...

Lawrence's view of doctrine as a component of guerrilla strategy was not, however, confined to the local or friendly populace. His concept was much broader--extending also to influencing the minds of the Arab guerrillas, the enemy soldiers, the hostile populace, and the populace of neutral nations. Thus, he observed: <sup>36/</sup>

...We had to arrange [our men's] minds in order to battle, just as carefully and as formally as other officers arranged their bodies: and not only our own men's minds, though them first: the minds of the enemy, so far as we could reach them: and thirdly, the mind of the nation supporting us behind the firing-line, and the mind of the hostile nation waiting the verdict, and the neutrals looking on.

In his broad view of the value of psychological indoctrination as an integral component of guerrilla strategy, Lawrence would clearly seem to have been at least a generation ahead of his time.

## Mao

Like that of Lawrence, Mao's guerrilla strategy was formulated on the basis of the objective and the situational posture of the Chinese Communists. However, as noted heretofore, the objectives of the Arabs and the Chinese Communists were quite different--that of the Chinese Communists being much broader in scope (with political and social as well as geographical aims) and much less straightforward than that of the Arabs; and, unlike the Arab rebellion, the situational posture of the Chinese Communists was not static--the Kuomintang forces being their enemy from 1927 to 1937, the Japanese being their ostensible enemy from 1937 to 1945, and the Kuomintang forces again being their enemy from 1945 to 1949.

Such differences in objective and in situational posture undoubtedly account for certain differences in emphasis between the guerrilla strategies of Lawrence and Mao. In this connection, it is interesting to note the perfidious difference between Mao's objective as stated to outsiders and as stated to his own followers after

the 1937 "alliance" with the Kuomintang for the purpose of combatting the Japanese. Thus, while purporting in his published writings (e.g. On Guerrilla Warfare) to be totally dedicated to the defeat and expulsion of the Japanese invader, he made the following remarks to his  
37/  
own troops:

The Sino-Japanese conflict gives us, the Chinese Communists, an excellent opportunity for expansion. Our policy is to devote seventy percent of our effort to this end, twenty percent to coping with the Government, and ten percent to fighting the Japanese. This policy is to be carried out in three stages. During the first stage, we are to work with the Kuomintang in order to ensure our existence and growth. During the second stage, we are to achieve parity in strength with the Kuomintang. During the third stage, we are to penetrate deep into parts of Central China to establish bases for counter attacks against the Kuomintang.

From the foregoing remarks, it appears evident that Mao's principal concern was never the fight with the Japanese but was always the creation of a politico-military force to conquer China; and, he clearly favored a long conflict between China and Japan, reasoning that such would inure  
38/  
to the benefit of the Chinese Communists.

Whereas Lawrence stated that the formulation of his guerrilla strategy flowed from a strategic and tactical analysis engaged in during a period of a few days,<sup>39/</sup> it appears that Mao's formulation of his guerrilla strategy occurred over a period of years primarily as the result of observation and experience. Nevertheless, the principal tenets of Mao's guerrilla strategy lend themselves to examination within Lawrence's categorical terminology of "mobility," "security," "time," and "doctrine." And, examination reflects that such tenets appear to be as follows:

Mobility:

Most of Mao's written comments are couched in terms of the conflict with Japan; but, it is evident that he considered his strategic and tactical theories to be equally applicable to the struggle with Kuomintang forces.<sup>40/</sup> His writings clearly reflect that Mao, like Lawrence, considered the space to forces ratio to be the key to formulation of his guerrilla strategy. Reasoning that the vast area of China defied complete occupation or garrison, and that "...Because of the enemy's insufficient manpower, guerrillas can operate over vast territories...", Mao

concluded that the space to forces ratio constituted a decided advantage to the Chinese Communist guerrillas and dictated that "...the principal element of our strategy must be mobility...".<sup>41/</sup> As stated by Mao:<sup>42/</sup>

Geographically the theater of war is so vast that it is possible for us to pursue mobile warfare with the utmost efficiency and with a telling effect...

Mao postulated that "...guerrillas must move with the fluidity of water and the ease of the flowing wind..." and that they must "deceive, tempt, and confuse the enemy. ..." By pursuing such a basic strategy of mobility, Mao felt that the guerrillas could effectively cause dispersal of the enemy's forces and dissipation of the enemy's strength.<sup>43/</sup>

Mao's attitude toward engaging in battle with the enemy was different than the attitude of Lawrence--who felt that battles were a "mistake" for guerrillas and should be avoided. Although Mao also pursued a strategy of avoiding "great decisive battles" and of not attacking an objective unless certain of winning, he favored attack and destruction of the enemy whenever conditions were favorable; and, unlike Lawrence--to whom "killing Turks" was not an aim--Mao definitely viewed the killing or

capturing of the enemy as a major guerrilla goal. <sup>44/</sup>

In line with his basic strategy of mobility, Mao's tactics were akin to the "tip and run" tactics adopted by Lawrence. As described by Mao: <sup>45/</sup>

In guerrilla warfare, select the tactic of seeming to come from the east and attacking from the west; avoid the solid, attack the hollow; attack; withdraw; deliver a lightning blow, seek a lightning decision. ...

In the same vein, Mao advanced the following tactical rules for guerrillas: <sup>46/</sup>

...When guerrillas engage a stronger enemy, they withdraw when he advances; harass him when he stops; strike him when he is weary; pursue him when he withdraws. ....

In his tactical theories, Mao also expressed the same view as Lawrence with respect to defense by guerrillas stating that "...The tactics of defense have no place in the realm of guerrilla warfare. ..." <sup>47/</sup> However, with respect to concentration and dispersion of forces he espoused a somewhat different view than Lawrence; whereas Lawrence emphasized maximum dispersion of forces, Mao felt that it is sometimes desirable for guerrillas to concentrate in force. <sup>48/</sup> Quite obviously, this difference in emphasis flows from the different viewpoints of Lawrence



and Mao on the desirability of engagement in battle by guerrillas--Mao commenting on such point that: <sup>49/</sup>

Guerrillas concentrate when the enemy is advancing upon them, and there is opportunity to fall upon him and destroy him. ...

Security:

Like Lawrence, Mao considered security to be an essential strategic concept and a necessary corollary to his basic strategy of mobility. And, as had also been the case with Lawrence, Mao took a three-fold strategic view of security--encompassing base, reserve, and intelligence.

Mao considered the establishment of secure base areas by the Chinese Communist guerrillas to be of particular strategic importance. He expressed the view that secure base areas are absolutely necessary so that "...guerrillas can carry out their duties of training, self-preservation and development" and that without secure base areas guerrillas cannot exist and function over a long period of time. <sup>50/</sup> Unlike Lawrence, however, Mao had a dual concern with respect to establishment of secure base areas; such areas not only enhanced the effectiveness of the Communist guerrillas in the conflict with the Japanese

but also increased their power and fortified their bargaining position with respect to the Kuomintang forces. <sup>51/</sup>

Although not giving such factor as much emphasis in his writings as had Lawrence, Mao quite evidently considered the maintenance of an adequate reserve to be an essential element of guerrilla strategy. And, he felt that such reserve should be "relatively large" so that "...the leader is in a position to deal with any circumstances that may arise." <sup>52/</sup> In this respect it appears that Mao, like Lawrence, adhered to established military principles in the formulation of his guerrilla strategy.

Mao was no less cognizant than Lawrence of the importance of intelligence to guerrilla strategy. And, he placed heavy emphasis on the intelligence function, noting that "Careful planning is necessary if victory is to be won in guerrilla war... " and that a principal function of guerrillas is "...to gather information..." <sup>53/</sup>

Time:

As had also been true with Lawrence, time was the broad strategic concept upon which Mao's basic strategy of mobility was grounded. In Mao's strategic view, protracted harassment of the enemy over a prolonged

period of time would result in wearing the enemy down. Thus, Mao observed that the situational posture of the Chinese Communist guerrillas favored a "protracted war" and that the guerrilla's energies "...must be directed toward the goal of protracted war..."<sup>54/</sup> In this connection, he considered it an essential strategic objective of the guerrillas to "...lengthen the period that the enemy must remain on the defensive..."<sup>55/</sup> And, with specific reference to the conflict with the Japanese,<sup>56/</sup> Mao expressed the thesis that:

...Japan's economy will crack under the strain of a long, expensive occupation of China and the morale of her forces will break under the trial of a war of innumerable but indecisive battles. The great reservoirs of human material in the revolutionary Chinese people will still be pouring men ready to fight for their freedom into our front lines long after the tidal flood of Japanese imperialism has wrecked itself on the hidden reefs of Chinese resistance.

Doctrine:

From the inception of his guerrilla activities, Mao looked upon doctrine (i.e. indoctrination) as an indispensable element of his guerrilla strategy. And, his effectiveness in implementing such strategic element

probably stands unequalled. Certainly, Mao's burden in this respect was greater than that of Lawrence. Whereas Lawrence was concerned only with influencing attitudes vis a vis the Arab guerrillas versus the foreign Turkish occupiers, Mao had the dual task of influencing attitudes not only vis a vis the Chinese Communist guerrillas versus the foreign Japanese occupiers but also vis a vis the Communists versus the Chinese Nationalist government and its forces.

His recognition that the Communist guerrilla movement must have the support of the Chinese populace if it was to prevail is evidenced by the following remarks of Mao: <sup>57/</sup>

...Because guerrilla warfare basically derives from the masses and is supported by them, it can neither exist nor flourish if it separates itself from their sympathies and cooperation . . .

\* \* \*

The political goal must be clearly and precisely indicated to inhabitants of guerrilla zones and their national consciousness awakened. . .

And, his emphasis on the importance of indoctrination is illustrated by the following description of the

propaganda role of the individual guerrilla: <sup>58/</sup>

...Red partisans are not only warriors; they are at the same time political propagandists and organizers. Wherever they go they carry the message of the revolution, patiently explain to the mass of the peasantry the real missions of the Red Army, and make them understand that only through revolution can their needs be realized, and why the Communist Party is the only party which can lead them.

Like Lawrence, Mao's attitude toward doctrine as a component of guerrilla strategy was quite broad and was not confined to the local populace in its applicability. He also considered it necessary to influence the minds of his own guerrilla troops and of the enemy soldiers (both Chinese and Japanese); however, he apparently attached less concern than had Lawrence to doctrinal inculcation of non-Chinese populaces. Mao's view of doctrine as a strategic factor was essentially political in nature-- "...first, as applied to the [guerrilla] troops; second, as applied to the people; and, third, as applied to the enemy. ..."<sup>59/</sup> Thus, he exhorted his guerrilla officers to "...continually educate the [guerrilla] soldiers and inculcate patriotism in them. ..."<sup>60/</sup>; and, he stated the thesis that "...We further our mission of destroying the

enemy by propagandizing his troops..."<sup>61/</sup> Interestingly, however, with respect to former Chinese Nationalist troops who joined the Communist guerrillas during the war against Japan he cautioned that:<sup>62/</sup>

...care should be used during their reorientation to distinguish those whose idea is to fight the Japanese from those who may be present for other reasons.

Mao's utilization of doctrine as an integral component of guerrilla strategy has become a model and a pattern for insurgent movements. This fact, alone, illustrates the effectiveness of Mao's implementation of such strategy.

### The Strategies Compared

The strategic principles expounded by Lawrence and Mao are quite similar. It is in the emphasis placed on certain elements of their strategies and in the tactical implementation of their strategies that dissimilarities appear.

Thus, both Lawrence and Mao considered the space to forces ratio to be the key factor in the formulation of their strategies and, based thereon, each pursued a basic strategy of mobility; and, in implementation thereof

both Lawrence and Mao adopted hit-and-run type tactics designed to impose maximum harassment on the enemy. As a corollary of the basic strategy of mobility, both Lawrence and Mao considered security to be an essential strategic concept for guerrillas; and, each of them took a threefold strategic view of security--encompassing secure base areas, an adequate reserve, and maximum intelligence. Also, both Lawrence and Mao looked upon time as the broad strategic concept upon which was grounded the basic strategy of mobility; each considered time to be a guerrilla asset and aimed at wearing the enemy down by protracted harassment. Further, both Lawrence and Mao demonstrated awareness of the importance of the psychological element in their enunciation of doctrine as an integral component of guerrilla strategy--each devoting maximum effort to influencing the minds of their own forces, the enemy forces, and the populace.

The most evident dissimilarity in the strategies of Lawrence and Mao is reflected in their attitudes toward engaging in battle with the enemy. Whereas Lawrence did not consider killing or capturing the enemy to be a strategic aim and felt that battles were a mistake for

guerrillas and should be avoided, Mao looked upon killing or capturing the enemy as a major goal and favored attack and destruction of enemy forces whenever conditions were favorable. This difference in their attitudes makes it evident that in his concept of strategy Mao was much more Clausewitzian than Lawrence. It will be recalled that Clausewitz viewed the three main objects of warfare as: <sup>63/</sup>

- (a) To conquer and destroy the armed power of the enemy;
- (b) To take possession of his material and other sources of strength, and
- (c) To gain public opinion.

Mao embraced each of such objects in his guerrilla strategy; by contrast, Lawrence never viewed conquest or destruction of the enemy as being an object of his guerrilla strategy.

Another evident dissimilarity in the strategic views of Lawrence and Mao is reflected in their attitudes toward the relationship of guerrilla and regular forces. Lawrence felt that guerrillas were incapable of being molded into a regular army and, in fact, considered their irregularity to be their main virtue; by the same token, he opposed combination of guerrilla and regular forces. <sup>64/</sup> By contrast,



Mao favored combination of guerrilla and regular forces whenever possible, and progressively worked toward developing his guerrillas into regular forces.<sup>65/</sup>

Finally, glaring dissimilarity appears with respect to the implementation by Lawrence and Mao of the doctrinal element of their strategies. Thus, terrorism was never advocated or practiced by Lawrence; by contrast, terrorism was an integral facet of Mao's doctrinal strategy--with executions of "class enemies," confiscation of property, and enforced contributions of money and supplies being normal practices.<sup>66/</sup>

## BOUQUETS AND BRICKBATS

As inevitably seems to be the case with any outstanding person, both Lawrence and Mao have been the subject of contrasting opinions as to their abilities as guerrilla strategists and tacticians--Lawrence more so than Mao. And, this examination would be neither complete nor objective without some comment concerning such divergent opinions.

### Lawrence

Assessments of Lawrence's achievements have ranged from glowing praise to scathing denunciation.

Thus, Lawrence has been praised as the "first great theorist of guerrilla warfare."<sup>67/</sup> And, his book Seven Pillars of Wisdom has been characterized as a "masterly formulation of the theory of guerrilla warfare."<sup>68/</sup>

Further, the immortal Winston Churchill referred to him as an "astonishing personality" for whose guerrilla operations "no praise is too high."<sup>69/</sup>

By contrast, Lawrence has been denounced as a "fraud"<sup>70/</sup> whose work with the Arabs "merited no special

attention."<sup>71/</sup> And, his book Seven Pillars of Wisdom has been referred to as "...rather a work of quasi-fiction than of history."<sup>72/</sup> Further, it has been suggested that the guerrilla strategy which Lawrence claimed to have formulated was actually planned by General Allenby, the British commander in the Middle East;<sup>73/</sup> at the opposite extreme, it has also been alleged that such strategy was actually conceived by Prince Aziz Ali and developed and carried out by his brother, Prince Feisal.<sup>74/</sup>

Perhaps the conflict of opinion regarding Lawrence is best disposed of by the comment of the late B. H. Liddell Hart, who noted that his research and inquiry with respect thereto revealed:<sup>75/</sup>

...all those who for long periods were in close contact with Lawrence and his work in the Arab campaign... are linked in common admiration for Lawrence and an unstinting testimony to his transcendent powers...

And, perhaps Lawrence was--as he has been described-- "in part genius, in part charlatan, and entirely an enigma."<sup>76/</sup>

## Mao

Mao's achievements as a guerrilla leader have generally been the subject of praise--with only an occasional note of criticism being voiced.

Thus, Mao has been characterized as "the acknowledged master of guerrilla warfare."<sup>77/</sup> And, it has been said that his teachings with respect to guerrilla warfare "underlie most of the revolutionary wars fought since World War II" and have become "a blueprint for the 'national wars of liberation' " waged in recent years.<sup>78/</sup>

On the other hand, as the principal strategist and the political leader of the Chinese Communist guerrillas, Mao has been the subject of implied criticism, as follows:<sup>79/</sup>

...The great mistakes of the Red Army  
...were strategic, and for those the  
political leadership must be held  
chiefly responsible.

Further, question has been raised as to whether Mao's famed tactics of guerrilla warfare were, in fact, his brainchild--it having been suggested that such tactics were actually conceived and carried out by Chu Teh rather than Mao.<sup>80/</sup>

It is suggested that it would indeed be strange if Mao had not made strategic "mistakes" during the long period of his guerrilla activity. Also, insofar as the tactical implementation of his strategy is concerned, it is recalled that the military relationship of Mao and Chu was so close that they were often thought to be one person-- "the famous Red general Mao-chu."<sup>81/</sup> In any event, Mao's ultimate accomplishments speak for themselves. And, success is perhaps the best answer to criticism.

## CONCLUSION

As noted at the outset of this examination, it is agreed by military observers that guerrilla warfare is likely to become more and more prevalent in future years. Thus, it would seem to be incumbent on those who may be on the receiving end of such form of warfare to direct their attention to development of adequate counter-guerrilla strategies.

Necessarily, a prerequisite to development of counter-guerrilla strategy is an understanding of the basics of guerrilla strategy. And contrary to the comment of at least one writer that "Guerrilla fighting has no rules...", <sup>82/</sup> it is suggested that very clear-cut rules are discernible upon examination of the guerrilla strategies of Lawrence and Mao. In this respect, it is submitted that the strategic principles enunciated by Lawrence and Mao are still valid and pertinent--and are currently being put into practice by today's guerrilla leaders.

In the Introduction to his translation of Mao Tse-tung's On Guerrilla Warfare, Brigadier General Samuel B. Griffith advances the thesis that the key to counter-guerrilla activity is that "The tactics of guerrillas

must be used against the guerrillas themselves. ....";<sup>83/</sup>  
and, in elaboration he states that:<sup>84/</sup>

From a purely military point of view,  
antiguerrilla operations may be summed  
up in three words: location, isolation  
and eradication. ...

But, the late Captain B. H. Liddell Hart advanced a  
divergent view in his book Strategy, commenting that:<sup>85/</sup>

...However tempting the idea may seem  
of replying to our [guerrilla] opponents'  
'camouflaged war' activities by counter-  
offensive moves of the same kind, it would  
be wiser to devise and pursue a more subtle  
and far-seeing counter strategy.

It is suggested that both Griffith and Hart are  
correct and that reconciliation of the differing viewpoints  
expressed by them appears if one recognizes that Griffith's  
remarks are concerned with tactics and Hart's with strategy.  
It is also suggested, however, that from a long-range stand-  
point tactical approaches are not an adequate counter to  
guerrilla movements; such approaches have consistently met  
with failure. It would seem that any meaningful counter  
to guerrilla movements must be grounded on strategic con-  
siderations aimed at positive responses to the conditions  
which generate such guerrilla movements in the first place.

*Oliver J. Butler, Jr.*  
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strategies and in the tactical implementation of their strategies. Note is made of criticism, as well as praise, of their guerrilla activities. It is concluded that guerrilla warfare is likely to become more and more prevalent in future years; that development of adequate counter-guerrilla strategies requires understanding of guerrilla strategy; and that, in this respect, the strategic principles enunciated by Lawrence and Mao are still valid and pertinent and are being currently utilized by guerrilla leaders.

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